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INTRODUCTION

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Researching language-in-education in diverse, twenty-first century settings

Eleni Mariou[a], Florence Bonacina-Pugh[b], Deirdre Martin[c] and Marilyn Martin-Jones[a]

[a]School of Education, MOSAIC Centre for Research on Multilingualism, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, United Kingdom; [b]Moray House School of Education, The University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, United Kingdom; [c]Department of Educational Studies, University of London, London, United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

The articles in this special issue present research carried out in diverse linguistic contexts in the United Kingdom. The focus is primarily on Scotland and England, two educational jurisdictions where there is increasing divergence in language-in-education policy and practice. The articles discuss research into different forms of language-in-education provision, so our introduction traces the historical context for the emergence of these forms of provision. We then turn to the authors' reflections on the role of research in garnering knowledge about teaching/learning practices in specific settings, identifying the strengths and/or limits of particular practices and contributing to educational debates. We also compare the research lenses adopted in each study, showing that most studies focus in on the detail of classroom practices and learning processes, while one article takes a wide angle, historical approach and builds an account of shifts in policy discourses. In our concluding section, we argue that, if we are to build a fuller understanding of language-in-education policy and practice in contemporary contexts of diversity, we need research of both types. Language policies need to be seen – not as prescriptions that are 'fixed' in texts – but as fluid discursive processes that unfold in different ways, on different scales.

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Introduction

This special issue of *Language and Education* presents language-in-education research which has emerged in diverse social, linguistic and cultural contexts in the United Kingdom (UK). The focus is primarily on Scotland and England[1] – two different educational jurisdictions where there is increasing divergence in language-in-education policy and practice. The five articles featured here offer detailed reflections on research methodologies and they interrogate the nature of knowledge-building around language-in-education policy and practice, in contemporary contexts of diversity. They also provide a research lens on different discourses about linguistic and cultural diversity and on different discourses about language, literacy and learning

CONTACT Eleni Mariou e.mariou@bham.ac.uk

that have underpinned the development of particular forms of educational provision, in Scotland and England. Whilst most of the research discussed here was carried out in educational settings in the UK and deals with specific, situated aspects language-in-education policy and practice in two of the nations of the British Isles, the themes addressed in the five articles have clear resonances with research related to similar forms of educational provision in other national contexts.

We begin this Introduction with a brief overview of the five articles. Then, in order to place the forms of educational provision discussed here in a historical context, we provide a brief sketch of the significant changes that have taken place in the sociolinguistic landscape of the UK as a whole, over the last 60 years or so, we consider the current contours of linguistic and cultural diversity and we draw out some of the contrasts between language-in-education policy developments in Scotland and England. In our concluding section, we focus on the specific methodological and epistemological challenges arising out of language-in-education research in such contemporary contexts of linguistic and cultural diversity and on the different ways in which these challenges are addressed by the authors contributing to this special issue.

The contributions to this special issue

The articles that we have brought together in this special issue draw on research into different forms of state-supported educational provision, from preschool to secondary education, and on research into complementary, community-based education. They vary in scope, with some articles taking account of broad trends in language-in-education policy and practice and with others focusing in on the detail of classroom practices and learning processes. They also include examples of research involving different forms of educational intervention.

Joanna McPake and Christine Stephens present, and discuss, the findings of a pilot project into the feasibility of introducing new technology, as an additional resource for learning, into Gaelic-medium preschool settings in Scotland. They investigated the possibilities of using a tablet app that had been adapted for story-telling activities in Gaelic with children. This was design-based research which involved extended collaboration with educational practitioners. The broader language-in-education policy context for this research was the Scottish government's strategy for revitalising this historically minoritised language (Bòrd na Gàidhlig 2012 – *National Gaelic Language Plan, 2012-2017*). The authors frame their account of their pilot project with a detailed overview of recent policy developments related to the revitalisation of Gaelic. They also illustrate the specific challenges facing preschool practitioners as they endeavour to meet the goals set by the National Curriculum for Early Years Education (*The Curriculum for Excellence*) while, at the same time, providing the children in their playgroups with sufficient exposure to Gaelic and ample opportunities to learn and use the language.

Andy Hancock takes us to a complementary school context. He reflects on one aspect of a wider study (Hancock 2010) that he carried out in a Chinese complementary school in Scotland. His focus, in this article, is on his research into the strategies that children employ as they learn to read Chinese. He shows how he adapted research methods from socio-constructivist research into reading to develop dialogic ways of working with one Chinese teacher and her students. Complementary schools in the UK, such as this one are

run on a voluntary basis by people from local linguistic minority groups. They are called 'complementary schools' so as to foreground the important ways in which they 'complement' provision within the state education system (cf. Creese and Martin 2006; Blackledge and Creese 2010). Elsewhere, such schools are known as 'heritage language' or 'community language' schools.

Geri Smyth directs our attention to the nature and scope of linguistic and cultural diversity in urban areas of Scotland, focusing principally on the city of Glasgow. Her article draws on three research projects that she has carried out in this particular urban context. The first project involved extended ethnographic research in a primary school with an increasingly diverse school population. The change in the makeup of the school population was due to a shift in the UK government's policy on the dispersal of refugees and asylum seekers. In this school, Geri Smyth worked with children who had different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The aim was to build an account of the children's lived experience of learning a new language, in a new educational setting. The second project was carried out with adult refugees who were former teachers and focused on the factors that aided or constrained their attempts to reconstruct their professional identity in a new context. The third project is ongoing. The overall aim is to document the diverse language resources of teachers already working within the Scottish education system.

The article by Constant Leung focuses on language-in-education policy and practice in England with respect to provision of support for students learning English as an additional language (EAL). He provides a detailed historical analysis of the development of different forms of EAL provision in England, focusing in particular on the discursive and ideological shifts underpinning the move from reception classes to the mainstreaming of provision. He also traces the changes taking place in educational discourses about linguistic and cultural diversity from the mid-1970s onwards and, at the same time, charts the broad shifts in thinking about language learning over this period. In addition, Leung offers a brief overview of research into EAL provision in mainstream classes in England that has been conducted over the last decade or so, emphasising its process-oriented nature. The final section of his article then outlines priorities for future research into EAL policy and provision in England. Here, he stresses the need to take account of ongoing demographic change and new dimensions of diversity and calls for research which can offer pointers to teaching and learning practice that is better suited to contemporary diversities.

Sheena Gardner's article deals with one particular aspect of English language learning, namely the development of reading and writing abilities. Her article presents comparative research conducted in two different primary school settings that are characterised by linguistic and cultural diversity: a school in England and four schools in Malaysia, where English is taught at primary level as part of national educational policy. Gardner draws on research conducted with Aizan Yacoob, a Malaysian researcher. Their focus was on Malaysian children's learning experiences, both in the UK and in Malaysia, and on their understandings of what counts as 'doing literacy lessons'. This article offers detailed reflections on the use of researcher initiated role-play as a means of gathering data and on the dilemmas facing researchers when children's role play sessions draw attention to classroom routines and classroom management strategies that are not picked up through conventional classroom observation approaches.

Language-in-education and contemporary diversities in Scotland and England: an historical perspective

These five articles reflect the wide range of linguistic and cultural diversity in the UK in the twenty-first century. They also throw into sharp relief the contrasts emerging between language-in-education policy and practice in Scotland and England. One distinctive element of Scottish language-in-education policy – the commitment to the revitalisation of Gaelic and to the development of Gaelic-medium provision within the state education system – is illustrated in the article by Joanna McPake and Christine Stephens, along with the challenges arising from this policy. A second element of Scottish language-in-education policy that is markedly different from England is that there is provision for initial teacher education in the field of EAL in Scotland, whilst as we see in the article by Constant Leung, there is no such provision in England.

As Leung's article reminds us, the nature and scope of current forms of language-in-education policy and practice can be more fully understood in the light of past developments and in the light of changes that have taken place, more recently, in educational discourses. So, in this section, we trace the historical context for the emergence of the different language-in-education policies and forms of provision that are considered in each of the articles presented here. We also touch briefly on the major changes that have taken place in the sociolinguistic landscape of both Scotland and England.

Language revitalisation and language policy change

Since the middle of the twentieth century, there has been revival of interest in and identification with local language and cultural traditions rooted in different regions of the British Isles. Mobilisation around campaigns in support of regional languages, such as Gaelic, Irish and Welsh, and around local forms of cultural heritage has now led to different forms of political and institutional devolution in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and to considerable regional autonomy, especially with regard to the development of language-in-education policies and provision (cf. Mac-Giolla Chríost 2005, 2011; McLeod 2006; Williams and Morris 2000). A range of forms of educational provision have been introduced, including education solely through the medium of a minoritised language, immersion education, bilingual education, bilingual units within schools where English is the main medium of teaching and learning and classes for adult learners (cf. Hickey 1997; Williams 2000; Paterson 2003). Most developments have been at the preschool and primary school levels, though, in the case of Wales, Welsh-medium and bilingual education has also been widely developed at secondary school level (Jones and Martin-Jones 2004). In all of these regional contexts, some of the greatest gains in terms of 'new speakers' of minoritised languages have been in the larger urban areas, in cities such as Belfast, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Cardiff (e.g. McLeod, O'Rourke, and Dunsmore 2014).

Language, migration and language-in-education policy and practice (mid-1950s to late 1980s)

The UK has been a significant destination for transnational migration movements since the mid-twentieth century. And, for a much longer period, it has also seen the arrival of

different groups of refugees. In the immediate period after World War II, with the expansion of the economy, the UK relied on labour migration from Southern Europe and from former British colonies in the Caribbean and South Asia (New Commonwealth countries such as Jamaica, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan). During the decades that followed, refugees of African, Latin American, South Asian and South East Asian origin also came to live and work in the UK.

The trajectories of different groups of migrant and refugee origin, the social and economic conditions of settlement that they encountered and their experience of rebuilding their lives in the UK (primarily in England and Scotland) have been welldocumented in a substantial interdisciplinary literature, with contributions from anthropology, sociology, cultural studies and sociolinguistics (e.g. Saifullah Khan 1979; Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies 1982; Gilroy 1987; Bachu 1993; Ballard 1994). Educational policy responses to the changing profiles of local school populations have also been documented in considerable detail. Particularly close attention was paid to developments in language-in-education policy and practice, by sociolinguists and applied linguists, from the mid-1970s onwards (e.g. Edwards 1983; Cameron and Bourne 1988; Reid 1988; Phillips 1989; Alladina and Edwards 1991; Edwards and Redfern 1992; Martin-Jones and Saxena 1995; Creese 1995; Leung and Franson 2001). This research interest was sparked by the debates about the forms of language-in-education provision that were being proposed and developed at the time. The debates in England, and the particular discourses about diversity and about EAL provision circulating during this period, are retraced in incisive detail in the article contributed by Constant Leung to this special issue.

The late 1970s and early 1980s also saw a debate about the teaching of languages such as Bengali, Cantonese, Gujarati, Panjabi, Mandarin or Urdu within the state-funded education system. Throughout most of the 1970s, provision for the teaching of the languages of groups of migrant or refugee origin had been primarily organised in the voluntary sector, by groups of parents or by minority organisations. This provision formed the early foundations of what has come to be known as complementary education. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, some local education authorities did make premises available, on a no-cost basis, for community-run language classes (Tansley 1986). Some schools and local authorities also broadened their modern languages curriculum to include languages other than French and German (Phillips 1989). This broadening of the modern foreign languages curriculum was endorsed in early National Curriculum documents appearing in England and Wales in the late 1980s, with the proviso that a national language of one of the nation-states in the European Union (EU) was also included (Martin-Jones and Saxena 1995).

However, the 1990s saw a curtailing of local education authority budgets and of their capacity to provide support for the teaching of minority community languages. Many teachers of these languages were redeployed as EAL teachers or as bilingual classroom assistants (at primary or secondary level) (Bhatt and Martin-Jones 1992). The bulk of the provision for the teaching of minority community languages is now organised primarily on a voluntary basis, along lines such as those described by Andy Hancock, in his article for this special issue. In the first decade of this century, there has been a new surge of research interest in community-run classes and complementary education in the UK (e.g. Blackledge and Creese 2010; Lytra and Martin 2010). Andy Hancock's article is part of this latest tradition of research.

Contemporary mobilities and 'superdiversity' (1990s to the present)

The last decade of the twentieth century and the first decade of this century saw a rapid change in the migration flows to the UK, in the wake of globalisation. The scale and scope of transnational migration changed rapidly and, in 2004, new mobilities were set in place by the accession, to the EU, of eight nation-states in Eastern Europe. The intense process of diversification of diversity that has taken place over the last two decades or so has now come to be known, across the social sciences, as 'superdiversity' (Vertovec 2006, 2007).

When Stephen Vertovec first put forward this term nine years ago, he was working at the Migration, Policy and Society Research Centre (COMPAS) at Oxford University and tracking the significant shifts taking place in patterns of migration to the UK. Writing about the period between the mid-1990s and the middle of the first decade of this century, he drew attention to 'the increased number of new, small and scattered multiple origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants who have arrived over the last decade' (2007, 1024). Vertovec (2007) also emphasised the interaction taking place between local groups, in local urban neighbourhoods, workplaces, places of religious observance and in different educational settings. So, in its fullest sense, the notion of superdiversity refers to the increasingly differentiated makeup, social positioning and trajectories of different groups of migrant origin and what some researchers have called 'the meshing and interweaving of diversities' (Martin-Jones, Blackledge, and Creese 2012, 7).

One further dimension of diversification that is relevant to the research presented here (particularly the research discussed in the article by Sheena Gardner) relates to the changes taking place in tertiary education, particularly as a result of the internationalisation policies of universities. Today, British universities recruit students from across the world, particularly at postgraduate and doctoral level. Some of the doctoral students come to the UK with their families and take up residence for several years. Their children attend local schools. This increase in postgraduate and doctoral student mobility, along with their families, is yet another facet of contemporary diversities – one that also contributes to the shaping of the profile of local school populations, in the state sector and in the voluntary sector. As Andy Hancock points out in his article in this collection, some Chinese students in Scotland send their children to complementary schools, as well as to the local state-funded school, and some parents are involved in organising voluntary language education provision and in acting as volunteer teachers.

One consequence of the recent shifts in thinking about contemporary diversities described above has been a number of calls, in the fields of sociolinguistics and applied linguistics, for a move away from traditional research approaches which characterised local 'communities' as relatively homogeneous and bounded entities and a move towards a 'linguistics of contact' (Pratt 1987). Mary Louise Pratt was the first to anticipate the need for this epistemological shift in research among linguistically and culturally diverse groups. It is worth citing here, at some length, the way she formulated her call for a new research paradigm, since it is relevant to the research that is presented in this special issue:

> Imagine … a linguistics that decentered community, that placed at its centre the operation of language across lines of social differentiation, a linguistics that focused on modes and zones of contact between dominant and dominated groups, between persons of different and

> multiple identities, speakers of different languages, that focused on how such speakers constitute each other relationally and in difference, how they enact differences in language. (1987, 60)

The concept of the 'contact zone' is a particularly apt one for thinking about schools and classrooms such as those depicted in this special issue. It is also well suited to the goal of building an understanding of the nature of the relationship between the researcher and research participants in educational settings characterised by linguistic and cultural diversity.

Researching language-in-education in the context of contemporary diversities: taking account of changing discourses, changing policies and locally situated practices

All of the researchers contributing to this special issue show a concern with the role of research in garnering knowledge about teaching and learning practices in specific language-in-education settings, in identifying the strengths and/or limits of particular practices and in contributing to educational debates and to the imagining of language-in-education futures. At the same time, they adopt different research lenses.

Four of the contributions (by Sheena Gardner, Andy Hancock, Joanna McPake and Christine Stephens and Geri Smyth) focus in on particular groups of students and/or their teachers, with a view of shedding light on students' learning experiences in the classroom and on the funds of linguistic and cultural knowledge that they bring to their translingual encounters. As Marilyn Martin-Jones points out, in her Afterword, these four detailed studies provide different examples of innovation in the design of qualitative research methodology. Their research builds on different interpretive traditions in the social sciences and innovation is achieved by bringing together elements of different traditions – at the interface, as it were, between different fields of study – for example, between ethnography and the study of multimodal communication (Geri Smyth); between design-based research (involving extended collaboration with educational practitioners) and computer-based learning (Joanna McPake and Christine Stephens); between qualitative case study research and the socio-constructivist tradition of research into reading (including miscue analysis and think-aloud protocols) (Andy Hancock), and qualitative case study research and researcher-initiated role play by students (based on prior research into children's socio-dramatic play in home contexts) (Sheena Gardner). Sheena Gardner and Andy Hancock focus primarily on children's language and literacy learning experiences. Geri Smyth includes reference in her article to research with both learners and with teachers, while Joanna McPake and Christine Stephens focus primarily on preschool teachers and on the possibilities for introducing change in their use of classroom resources for learning, while engaging in extended collaboration with them. Multiple methods were used in all four of these qualitative studies, enabling the researchers to triangulate their findings across data sources, as in all well-designed qualitative research.

The fifth contribution takes a different research lens. Constant Leung takes a wide angle, historical approach in building his account of EAL policy developments in England. What we want to argue here, in this concluding section of our Introduction, is that we need research of both types if we are to build a full understanding of

language-in-education policy and practice in contemporary contexts of diversity. The different kinds of research presented in this special issue complement each other in important ways. We need research, such as that by Constant Leung – research that takes a wide angle, historical approach, focusing on language-in-education policy developments and on the wider discourses underpinning these developments. And, at the same time, we need research of a detailed, qualitative nature, such as that presented by the other four contributors — research that focuses on particular social actors in particular educational settings, that provides in-depth accounts of situated practices and that offers illuminating insights into the understandings and perspectives of those actors.

As we have seen in recent research in the ethnography of language policy, there is often a mismatch between language policy strategies and prescriptions and what actually happens 'on the ground', in local schools and classrooms. Several researchers (e.g. Hornberger and Johnson 2007; Johnson 2009, 2013; Menken and Garcia 2010) have shown us that teachers play a key role in the actual shaping of language-in-education policy, as they translate policies into practice within the day-to-day routines of classroom life, sometimes appropriating policies, sometimes subverting or resisting them and sometimes inventing new ways of interpreting and applying them.

Therefore, language-in-education policies need to be seen — not as fixed textual prescriptions — but as complex discursive processes that unfold on different scales, from the original formulation of policies by governmental bodies at national or regional level to the making and remaking of those policies in and through action and interaction in local schools and classrooms. And, crucially, as McCarty (2011, 8) has put it, policy processes need to be seen 'as modes of human interaction, negotiation and production mediated by relations of power'. There is therefore much to be gained from research accounts which move across scales, giving us detailed insights into language policy processes at work in contexts of diversity and into the ways in which these processes either enable or constrain language learning in local schools and classrooms. The learning of languages and literacies is, of course, always embedded in a particular policy context, where particular language values, particular ideas about language and particular curricular goals prevail.

In addition, as researchers working in contemporary contexts of diversity, we need to be mindful of changes taking place over time in the wider political and ideological landscape, in the late modern age, and we need to keep track of the ways in which these changes are shaping not only policy discourses but also teaching and learning practices 'on the ground'. National and regional governmental policies related to education are increasingly being shaped within a global order. Drawing on the work of Ball (2008), Constant Leung makes a crucial mention of the increasing dominance of a neo-liberal discourse in England 'that emphasises competition as an organising principle for society' and, by extension, for education. He also notes the significant moves that have been made in recent years towards the differentiation of provision in school-based education in England, with the introduction of academies and free schools, outside the control of local education authorities, and the increased competition between 'education providers'. Referring to this context, he writes of 'the ebbing away of the equality of entitlement narrative' that characterised education policy and practice in England in the 1970s and 1980s. In his concluding remarks, he rightly observes that 'it is not at all clear how the equality of entitlement agenda is being played out in the different kinds of schools and in competition-oriented classrooms'.

Globalised neo-liberal discourses such as these circulate in different ways, in different national and regional contexts, and they are more dominant in some contexts than in others. Judging from the research from Scotland included in this special issue, and from accounts of language-in-education policy in England and Scotland in other areas of educational provision (cf. recent work by Simpson 2015, on the diverging strategies for Adult ESOL – The Teaching of English as an Additional Language), there appears to be evidence that the long-established narrative about equality of entitlement for different groups in society within the main state-funded education system still holds relatively firm in Scotland. This stands in striking contrast to the considerable discursive shifts that have taken place in England.

Therefore, we rest our case: within the limits of what it is possible to achieve in contemporary language-in-education research, we argue that need to devise ways of designing our research in ways that allow us to take account of different scales. The central core of our research might be detailed case studies, design-based research, intervention studies, action research or ethnography in particular educational settings, and our initial focus might be on working with local teachers and their students. However, we also need to keep our sights on the wider policy processes at work in the particular context of diversity in which we find ourselves, and on the powerful globalised discourses underpinning those processes.

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